

Teaching vaginal surgery at Haydom Lutheran Hospital in Tanzania

Haydom Lutheran Hospital in Mbulu District, Tanzania, is a referral hospital for the nearby smaller hospitals and dispensaries. The Department of Obstetrics & Gynaecology at the hospital delivers around 3,500-4,000 babies per year and manages out-reach maternity care for the community. The department also performs minor and major gynaecological surgery. All this care is provided by only two specialists in obstetrics & gynaecology but the staff also includes registrars and interns as well as clinical officers who are not formally trained as MDs but have a shorter practical education.

The population has a high number of children per woman largely attributing to the high rate of pelvic organ prolapses. Therefore, pelvic floor surgery including vaginal hysterectomies and different approaches to treat pelvic organ prolapses are severely needed. Despite having two specialist doctors in gynaecology the skills in this type of surgery have not been sufficient to provide this type of care. Most hysterectomies prior to this project were performed through a transabdominal approach and no pelvic floor surgery was performed. This project was therefore directed to teach vaginal surgery at the Haydom Lutheran Hospital. Dr Sebastian Gidlöf who have previously worked at the hospital and Drs Gunilla Tegerstedt and Jona Elings Knutsson travelled to the hospital in December 2018. They brought surgical equipment as a donation funded by crowd-funding. The crowd-funding also covered any patient fees for the operations. At the hospital they taught vaginal surgery during operations at the hospital. A total of about 20 women underwent surgery and during their stay and in the end the local gynaecologists had acquired the skills to independently perform vaginal hysterectomies and anterior and posterior colporaphies.

The NFOG funding was pivotal in covering the travelling expenses, visa and also covered lodging and necessary immunisations prior to the travel. We are pleased with having provided enough teaching so that the local staff now can perform these operations on their own and we consider this a great potential for the local population. We wish to thank the NFOG for funding this project and making it possible.